

Yakima River Basin Water Storage Feasibility Study: A Progress Report

Bureau of Reclamation, Upper Columbia Area Office – August 31, 2007

Storage Study Draft Planning Report/Environmental Impact Statement (Draft PR/EIS)

Reclamation is preparing the Draft PR/EIS to fulfill its planning requirements and to address alternatives from the January 2007 scoping process. The Draft PR/EIS will address water supply issues in the Yakima River basin and evaluate the impacts of each alternative. The Draft PR/EIS will be a joint document with the State of Washington that will meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). The Draft PR/EIS will be available for a 90-day public review and comment period beginning in early January 2008. During that comment period, a public hearing will be held to receive comments. These comments will be used to prepare a Final PR/EIS scheduled to be completed by the end of 2008.

Joint Alternatives

These alternatives, derived from the January 2007 scoping process, meet the requirements of the congressional authorization for Reclamation to study the benefits of water storage alternatives in the Yakima basin. The State of Washington, through the Department of Ecology, is cost sharing the analysis of these alternatives. The following are called Joint Alternatives because of this cooperative analysis component.

- Black Rock
- Wymer Dam and Reservoir
- Wymer Dam Plus Yakima River Pump Exchange

In addition, a No Action Alternative will be analyzed as the basis for comparison to the other alternatives. The No Action Alternative includes certain water conservation and other activities authorized in 1994 that are expected to be implemented.

SEPA Alternatives

Because the state authority for the Storage Study is broader than the congressional authorization, Ecology will consider other potential alternatives that arose during the scoping process. Ecology will include an analysis of some or all of the following in the Draft PR/EIS:

- Enhanced Water Conservation Measures
- Market-Based Reallocation of Resources
- Aquifer Storage and Recovery
- Columbia River Off-Channel Storage

Study Activities

Design and Cost Estimates

All cost estimates for the alternatives in the Storage Study have been repriced at the April 2007 price level.

Hydrologic Modeling

Reclamation staff has completed operation models for the Joint Alternatives. The operations models show what the alternatives accomplish in providing additional water for endangered fish, irrigated agriculture, and municipal needs. All alternatives will be analyzed for the amount and timing of water they would provide for use in the Yakima Basin.

Black Rock Seepage Study

Reclamation's report on the groundwater impacts of a Black Rock reservoir has been reviewed by the U.S. Geological Survey, Ecology, U.S. Department of Energy, and the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. This report estimates the amount, timing, and direction of seepage that may be expected from a Black Rock reservoir. Reclamation expects to finalize this report and make it publicly available in early September 2007.

Environmental Impact Statement

Reclamation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Yakama Nation, and consultants are preparing analyses of alternatives on the environment. These analyses are based on the following resources:

- Global Climate Change
- Water
- Hydropower
- Sediment
- Water Quality
- Vegetation and Wildlife
- Anadromous Fish
- Resident fish
- Threatened and Endangered Species
- Recreation
- Land and Shoreline Use
- Socio-Economics
- Transportation
- Air Quality
- Noise
- Visual Resources
- Historic Properties
- Indian Sacred Sites
- Indian Trust Assets
- Social
- Environmental Justice
- Unavoidable Adverse Impacts
- Relationship between Short-term and Long-term Productivity
- Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

For more information:

For further information on the Storage Study, contact Mr. Kim McCartney, Storage Study Manager, at (509) 575-5848, ext. 370, or email storagestudy@pn.usbr.gov.